

THE PRONUNCIATION OF INSECT NAMES.

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The very able discussion by Professor Melander* of the principles involved in the correct pronunciation of scientific names fails to give rules to meet the very frequent cases where the derivation of a word is unknown as is true for most of us for the major part of the names we habitually use, to say nothing of the host of names we occasionally meet.

It is probably true as he intimates that we are in this country the most erratic in this respect, and I want to protest against the idea that he favors of considering that scientific Latin is correctly pronounced one way in one country and in a different but equally correct way in another, especially since he advocates for America a pronunciation no longer permitted by the Latin departments of our high schools and universities.

When the information is at hand as in the case of the large number of words brought together by Professor Melander, we should pronounce the words in the manner approved by the authorities on Latin. Those of us who are older and who have habits of mispronunciation so fixed that we cannot change surely should urge the coming generations of entomologists to start right.

There are two tendencies in our language that make it difficult to correctly pronounce Latin words.

One is the variety of the phonetic value of our vowels and our inconsistent coupling of sounds, *a*, *e* and *i* long having no relation with what we commonly designate as the corresponding short sounds. The English short *a*, which does not occur at all in Latin, is not infrequently heard and *y* may be given the value in the English word *by* and many other analogies with English words result in grotesque and surprising disguises of the Latin words.

The other tendency is our habitual suppression of unaccented vowels. When the accent is correctly placed the sound of the word is not seriously interfered with. It is only because of this

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tendency of English speech that the placing of the accent is highly important.

Representing the unaccented vowels by dots the common pronunciation of *Carabus*, *Carabidæ* and *Carabinæ* is respectively *Car. b. s.*, *C. rab. d.*, *C. r. bin.*, words which to the ear have very little in common while in the true Latin pronunciation with all vowels given their true sound the difference is more comparable with the difference between *sin*, *sinner*, *sinned* or *sinning*.

As a practical suggestion to cover that great class of words whose derivation we do not know, the careful avoidance of these two tendencies will result in a pronunciation very close to the correct one and a word completely intelligible to anyone, even those who are used to an incorrect placing and exaggeration of the accent.

The vowels may be all pronounced as in the English words *what*, *they*, *machine*, *tho* and *rue*, the *y* being a shortened *i*, and do not exaggerate the accent but give the penultimate and antepenultimate syllable approximately equal stress.

This suggestion is simply intended to enable the user of unknown Latin words to avoid the prevalent gross errors of pronunciation in those cases where the precise pronunciation is unknown and reduces the possible error to the minimum.

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Sooner or later, every entomologist, amateur or professional, is asked by some inquirer for the name of the one book which will tell him what he wants to know in a general way about the insects likely to be seen on a summer afternoon's walk. This question has never had a satisfactory answer, for those books interestingly written were either so inaccurate or so sketchy as to be of very little use; and those which were fuller and more accurate were far too technical and special for the lay inquirer. Now, all of us can answer that question to the satisfaction of all concerned—of the inquirer, because he gets something really useful as well